



Reduce Liver Fat With 150 Minutes of Aerobic Exercise Per Week

Research confirms exercise as effective treatment for fatty liver disease.

February 13, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

The Department of Health and Human Services recommends 150 minutes of moderate to intense aerobic activity per week for overall health. Now new research from Penn State College of Medicine confirms that this same amount of exercise can significantly reduce [liver](#) fat.

Researchers already knew that exercise aids in reducing liver fat in people with [non-alcoholic fatty liver disease \(NAFLD\)](#), but this meta-analysis of 14 previous studies determined the specific amount of exercise required to substantially improve one's liver health.

NAFLD and its more severe form, [non-alcoholic steatohepatitis \(NASH\)](#), are responsible for a growing proportion of advanced [liver disease](#), mirroring a global rise in obesity. Fatty liver disease can lead to liver fibrosis, cirrhosis and even [liver cancer](#). With no effective approved medical therapies, management depends on lifestyle changes such as weight loss and exercise.

Published in the [American Journal of Gastroenterology](#), the findings can help physicians feel more confident prescribing exercise as a treatment for NAFLD, according to lead study author Jonathan Stine, MD, MSc, an associate professor of medicine and public health sciences and a hepatologist at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

"Having a target amount of physical activity to aim for will be useful for health care and exercise professionals to develop personalized approaches as they help patients modify their lifestyles and become more physically active," he said in a [Penn State news release](#).

Stine and his team reviewed 14 studies involving 551 people with NAFLD who participated in randomized, controlled trials examining exercise.

Exercise training was found to be three and a half times more likely to achieve clinically meaningful treatment response, defined as a 30% or greater relative reduction in liver fat compared with standard clinical care.

A secondary analysis found that 39% of patients prescribed at least 750 metabolic equivalents of task—for example, 150 minutes of brisk walking per week—saw significant treatment response

compared with 26% of people prescribed lower doses of exercise.

“Exercise is a lifestyle modification, so the fact that it might match the ability of in-development therapeutics to achieve the same outcome is significant,” Stine said. “Clinicians counseling patients with NAFLD should recommend this amount of activity to their patients. Brisk walking or light cycling for 1/2 an hour a day five times a week is just one example of a program that would meet these criteria.”

To learn more, click [#NAFLD](#). There, you’ll see articles such as "[Lean People With NAFLD May Have Higher Mortality Risk](#)," "[Two Thirds of People With Overweight or Obesity Have Fatty Liver Disease](#)," and "[Caffeine May Reduce Severity of NAFLD in Those With Type 2 Diabetes](#)."

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